

**Statement for the Record
of Carolyn Bartholomew
Vice Chairman of the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission
before the
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights, and International Operations
and the
Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific
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Thank you Chairman Smith, Chairman Leach, and Ranking Members Payne and Faleomavaega for the opportunity to present the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission's findings and recommendations on the issue of China's Internet censorship. I spoke before the Congressional Human Rights Caucus on February 1 on this topic and am pleased to submit my testimony for today's official record.

Last month, in his State of the Union address, President Bush stated that "we seek the end of tyranny in our world". While noting that "more than half the people of our world live in democratic nations," he went on to say that "we do not forget the other half....because the demands of justice, and peace of this world, require their freedom as well." With the pursuit of freedom so central to his Administration, it is particularly disappointing that the President did not mention the lack of basic freedoms in China, including freedom of assembly, freedom of religion, and freedom of speech.

Despite the hopes of many in the United States, China's economic reforms have not led to political reforms or to fundamental improvements in its policy of controlling the flow of information. During the debate on granting China Permanent Normal Trade Relations, the main argument proffered by supporters was that expanded trade would lead to economic reform which, in turn, would increase China's exposure to basic human rights and democracy to the point that the Communist regime would be unable to halt steady progress in these dimensions. Regrettably, this hope has not been realized.

China's economic growth has resulted in much greater access by the Chinese people to telecommunications and to the World Wide Web, but the Chinese government to date has parried all of these moves, in most cases with startling effectiveness, by deploying advanced technology to censor telephonic and Internet communication, track cyber dissidents, and disseminate propaganda.

The U.S.-China Commission held a hearing in April 2005 on this topic and included in its November 2005 annual report to Congress findings and recommendations based on that hearing. What the Commission has found thus far is that China has the most sophisticated Internet filtering system in the world. According to RAND Corp's Scott Tanner, who has testified before the Commission, several different Chinese government security organizations, including the Public Security Bureau (PSB), the Ministry of State Security, and the People's Liberation Army monitor Chinese Internet usage.

The Chinese government has tens of thousands of Internet police on its payroll at the local, provincial, and national levels. The government uses “hard” techniques such as routers that disrupt user attempts to access particular websites, software that detects sensitive key words and prevents user connections to sources where those words appear, and programs that block Internet discussion boards and chat rooms. It also uses soft techniques such as burdensome licensing requirements for Internet cafes and harsh but selective enforcement that encourages self-censorship.

The Internet censorship system in China is designed to limit international concerns about its censorship. Chinese authorities primarily restrict Chinese language content rather than content in English or other foreign languages, drawing less attention from foreign critics but not appreciably diluting the effectiveness of the censorship. Blocking techniques that precisely target prohibited content coupled with less blocking of similar but less sensitive materials ensure the Chinese system is effective while it is not obvious to the casual Internet user. The Chinese government also uses “collective responsibility” and self-censorship to discourage free expression of ideas via the Internet. For example, it often requires at least two people to be responsible for content posted on a website. The Commission heard testimony from the OpenNet Initiative that, as new Internet communications methods become popular, the Chinese government integrates filtering systems into their architectures.

As a condition of their operation in China, Internet Service Providers are required to keep personal data on subscribers and monitor themselves, which requires hiring site moderators to ensure posted content complies with government requirements. The Commission heard testimony from Xiao Qiang of the China Internet Project at the University of California at Berkeley that “A list recently obtained by the China Internet Project in Berkeley found that over 1,000 words, including ‘dictatorship,’ ‘truth,’ and ‘riot police,’ are automatically banned in China’s online forums.”

While there are experts who will be able to tell the Subcommittees about the Chinese government’s technological methods for censorship, I would like to focus the remainder of my statement on the security implications for the United States of the Chinese government’s censorship activities and the threat that these developments pose to the technological leadership of the United States and to the vision of the Internet as a tool for the free flow of information around the world.

China’s Internet controls pose a security concern for the United States by facilitating the Chinese government’s commanding role in the formation of public opinion about the United States and U.S. policies. These practices risk creating an environment prone to misunderstanding and miscalculation in the bilateral relationship, particularly during times of crisis. The Chinese government encourages nationalist sentiment on the Internet and rarely censors anti-U.S., anti-Japanese, and anti-democratic views, while anti-Chinese government sentiments are heavily monitored and quickly removed.

In testimony before the Commission, Xiao Qiang offered an example of how the Chinese government actively shapes opinion on the Internet:

“In the last seven years, [the] Chinese government has put in enormous financial resources and allowed special privileges to set up and support government-sponsored websites, from the national level to regional and provincial levels...For example, in one of the most popular bulletin board sites, ‘Strong Country Forum,’ whenever there are large news events, the editors always invite ‘experts’ and government officials to directly chat with netizens, and communicate the government point of view. They [have] also designated propaganda agents to work undercover online, pretending to be ordinary netizens, in order to monitor [the] Internet as well as ‘guide’ online discussions.”

China’s level of high-technology development has increased quickly over the past several years and is accelerating. At the same time, it has begun to assume the role of technological leader among the developing states in its region. China serves as the regional Internet provider for surrounding repressive regimes including North Korea and Uzbekistan, and for other nations such as Kyrgyzstan. Through this role as an Internet gatekeeper, China exports its filtering technologies to other governments that may choose to employ them.

The Commission heard testimony at its hearing on China’s high technology development that China, Japan, and South Korea are engaging in a regional approach to developing some telecommunications technologies. According to Kate Walsh of the Naval War College, the three states have already “agreed to co-develop products in at least seven areas of IT, including 3G and next-generation mobile communications, next generation Internet (IPv6)...network and information security.”

With regard to “next generation Internet” or IPv6, John Gage of Sun Microsystems testified that unlike previous versions, IPv6 provides a better means for tracking the source and destination of material on the Internet. This is a huge benefit to a government hoping to monitor dissident content. And in fact, China was the first place that had access to a large-scale “next generation Internet” or IPv6 network.

In addition to our serious concerns about what is occurring in China, we are also concerned about the apparent contributions U.S. technology companies are making to China’s capability to control and repress information, and to identify and penalize those who express views contrary to the government’s.

Some U.S. technology firms that wish to establish, maintain, or expand their presence in the Chinese market have reportedly assisted China’s government by providing and/or operating censorship mechanisms and even by identifying the authors of Internet content to which the government objects. Much recent public attention has been on Google, which has placed limits on its Internet searches so resources not in accord with the Chinese government’s policies are not presented to searchers.

As cited in the Commission’s 2005 Annual Report, Google argues that its users would be poorly served by a display of news sites that they could not access because those sites are blocked by the government. Last month, Google launched its .cn service. A Google search on that site using the phrase “riot police” illustrated selective censoring. A search was done on Google.com at the same

time, bringing up stories that were not available on the .cn version, including links to BBC, Wikipedia and independent blogs, for example. At the bottom of the .cn page was the following message, in Chinese, “According to local laws and regulations and the policy, part of the search results are not shown.”

Google’s current cooperation with the Chinese government on this matter also has prevented the Chinese government from having to respond to complaints from Chinese Internet users that they are being denied access to information they wish to obtain. It could be beneficial to Google’s users and to those fighting for more openness in China if searchers on .cn were made aware of the specific sites that might be of interest to them, but that they are not permitted to access.

As for Yahoo, upon its entrance in the China market, Yahoo signed a voluntary code of conduct, obliging it to prevent Chinese Internet users from expressing anti-government sentiments. It has now reportedly aided the government in identifying and imprisoning two journalists in China. Last year Yahoo released the private emails of journalist Shi Tao to the Chinese government. And just last week, information surfaced regarding Yahoo’s 2003 release of information to the Chinese government on Li Zhi, an online journalist and corruption critic, which led to his arrest.

In testimony to the Commission, Mr. Gage of Sun Microsystems quoted Orville Schell’s question whether the Internet would change China or whether China would change the Internet. At the time, Mr. Gage believed, the answer appeared to be “a little of both.” However, after observing U.S. technology companies compliantly abide by the Chinese government’s wishes and China’s considerable progress in becoming an important regional player in Internet services, I believe there is good reason to fear China may change the Internet more than the Internet will change China. If that proves to be true, the implications are detrimental to the United States and its interests and, more broadly, to the cause of the free flow of information around the globe.

I commend the two Subcommittees for highlighting this issue and am pleased to provide the Commission’s recommendations to Congress on this topic, made in our 2005 Annual Report:

- Increase the funding for the Broadcasting Board of Governors’ Internet anti-censorship activities targeted at China. The BBG should be encouraged to refine its efforts to prevent illegitimate use of its services in order to avoid incidentally blocking inoffensive Web sites.
- Prohibit the disclosure by U.S. companies to the Chinese government, in the absence of formal legal action by the Chinese government, of information about Chinese users or authors of online content. Congress should require that where a U.S. company is compelled to act, it shall inform the U.S. government. A compilation of this information should be made publicly available semi-annually.
- Create an entity within the executive branch to develop a comprehensive strategy to combat state-sponsored blocking of the Internet and persecution or harassment of users. The strategy should include the development and deployment of anti-censorship technologies. The strategy must adhere to certain universally recognized limitations that may appropriately be imposed, but should minimize incidental blocking of inoffensive Web sites.

Although the U.S. government cannot easily or directly change the course of China's government, it is not powerless to affect this situation. There are things it can do to make it more difficult for China to succeed in its censorship efforts. It can help American technology companies that wish to resist Chinese pressure to facilitate those efforts. And it can make it more difficult for American companies that are agnostic on the subject to facilitate China's censorship and control efforts. The Commission's recommendations are pointed in these directions.

Thank you, again, for your leadership in raising the issue of China's Internet censorship behavior. The Chinese government's activities are a human rights concern and an incursion on freedom of expression that is fundamental to free people everywhere. Its actions also pose a security concern for the United States.

The U.S.-China Commission stands ready to offer its assistance to you on this important issue.